

On February 19, 2010, President Obama and the Department of Education announced a new Race to the Top High School Commencement Challenge, inviting public high schools across the country to compete to have President Obama speak at their graduation ceremony this spring. The Race to the Top High School Commencement Challenge gives schools in New Jersey an exciting opportunity to demonstrate how they are making great strides on personal responsibility, academic excellence and college readiness.

Applications must be completed by students and submitted by a high school's Principal using the [Commencement Challenge Application Form](#) no later than Monday, March 15th at 11:59 pm EST. Each school may submit only one application and high schools must be public to apply. Following the application deadline, six finalists will be selected by the White House and Department of Education. These schools will then be featured on the White House website and the public will have an opportunity to vote for the three schools they think best meet the President's goal. The President will select a national winner from these three finalists and visit the winning high school to deliver the commencement address to the class of 2010.

The application's four essay questions focus on demonstrating how the school is helping prepare students to meet the President's 2020 goal of having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. Applications will be judged based on the school's performance and dedication to providing students an excellent education that will prepare them to graduate ready for college and career choices. Each question must be answered in full to qualify and data that substantiates each answer is strongly encouraged.

In addition to the required essay responses, applicants are invited to submit the following materials (these supplemental materials are optional):

- A video -- no more than 2 minutes in length -- showing the school's culture and character and highlighting how it is a model of educational success for other high schools around the country.
- Supplemental data on key indicators such as attendance, student achievement, graduation rates and where available, college enrollment rates. This data may be presented in the form of tables, graphs or spreadsheets and should be used to help the school make the most compelling arguments possible.

Please use the [Commencement Challenge Application Form](#) to apply.

